



NEWS RELEASE

COUNCIL PRESIDENT BEN HUESO

District Eight

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Council President Delivers *State of District Eight* Address

SAN DIEGO – Tonight Council President Ben Hueso spoke directly to District 8 constituents with a State of the District event held at San Ysidro's Casa Familiar Civic & Recreation Center located at 212 East Park Avenue. Because District 8 is not geographically contiguous, Hueso hosted a similar community meeting last week at Perkins Elementary School, 1770 Main Street, to address accomplishments affecting residents living in the northern part of his district.

During the 30-minute address in San Ysidro, Hueso spoke of his overarching goal, "to ensure your life as a District 8 resident will be better tomorrow than it is today."

He acknowledged that challenges lie ahead as the City closes a \$54 million budget gap for the next fiscal year. "The decisions we make as a result of these discussions can have a tremendous impact on our future quality of life," he said. "My priorities for our district reflect my understanding that people are suffering due to job losses and foreclosures; and also incorporate my ongoing commitment to protect the environment."

Citywide Accomplishments

Hueso reflected on the City's speedy response to a midyear \$43 million budget deficit last fall, that resulted from dramatically reduced property, sales, and TOT tax revenue. With little time to analyze options, the City was able to preserve core city services and to keep recreation centers and libraries open.

Looking ahead, Hueso underscored San Diego need to address its long term issues. Past underfunding of the pension has threatened the city's financial stability. "I am proud to say that we have budgeted payments to both the retirement pension and the healthcare pension that have either matched or exceeded the required contribution to ensure full funding every year since I was elected," said Hueso.

In fact, for Fiscal Year 2009, the City contributed \$161.7 million for the full payment of their annual required contribution for the new 20-year Unfunded Actuarial Accrued Liability (UAAL) amortization schedule.

“Honoring agreements made in the past, and to prepare for the future prudently, we implemented a two-tiered system for City employees in a retirement benefit organization that will save the City nearly \$23 million over 20 years,” Hueso said.

Another accomplishment: by finishing the last of five annual audits, both Fitch Ratings and Moody’s Investors Service raised the City’s credit rating. As a result, the City of San Diego was able to borrow money for the first time in five years. The \$157 million that was raised by selling water bonds will save the city nearly \$6 million in interest over the next 12 years and will help to fund a wide range of water, sewer and maintenance infrastructure projects.

District Accomplishments

Hueso then addressed issues of particular concern to local constituents. He highlighted accomplishments impacting the southern part of his district, including community planning efforts for San Ysidro and Otay Mesa, affordable housing projects such as the Villa Nueva Apartments (its 398 units make it the largest affordable preservation project in California), infrastructure improvements throughout the district, and public safety issues including initiatives to address gangs and graffiti.

One particular project in San Ysidro demonstrated the impact infrastructure projects can have on overall quality of life. On paper, a \$245,000 investment to add medians and a new traffic signal on Beyer Boulevard seem like a straightforward infrastructure improvement. Yet the allocation corrected a significant problem. Before the construction, it was nearly impossible to access the San Ysidro Health Center building without jaywalking or walking an unacceptable distance to cross the road legally. Now, those who need access to health care can do so safely.

Hueso discussed park projects, including allocations to Beyer Street Park planning in an effort to expedite construction, funding for new parking spaces and a new comfort station at Montgomery Waller Park, and efforts to push forward the construction of Riviera del Sol in Oceanview Hills among others. In addition to being able to keep libraries and community service centers open during the budget cuts, Hueso voted to allocate \$180,000 to restore pool hours citywide. He found additional funding to maintain Vista Terrace’s normal pool hours and found money to replace the roof there.

Hueso cited his efforts to work with the County and City of Chula Vista to complete a network of recreational trails for biking, hiking, and equestrian use at Otay Valley Regional Park and to build a 43-acre regional park to give Otay Mesa/Nestor and Nestor residents greater field access to play a wide range of active sports.

Public safety was cited as an ongoing priority; San Diego is fortunate to be able to rely on top-notch protection. One local fire station, 43, in Brownfield, was mentioned as being fully staffed and with newer, better equipment.

Hueso mentioned his support for the Gang Commission's efforts to promote practical solutions that address the underlying causes of gangs.

Turning to the environment, Hueso stressed the importance of a multi-agency effort to clean and protect The Tijuana River Valley, one of the most important estuarine ecosystems in the world and one of only a few Ramsar sites.

Looking ahead

In discussing the City's upcoming budgeting process, which will require closing a projected \$54 million gap rather than the more usual \$7-10 million.

In terms of his priorities for the year, Hueso cited the importance of revitalizing the economy, promoting livable neighborhoods, and protecting the environment. He talked about working to ensure District 8 constituents receive a fair allocation of federal stimulus funds.

Council President Ben Hueso serves residents of District Eight in the City of San Diego and chairs the Council's Rules, Open Government and Intergovernmental Relations Committee. Hueso also serves as a California Coastal Commissioner, as League of California Cities representative for San Diego, on SANDAG Board of Directors, SANDAG Borders Committee, and on the Otay Valley Regional Park Policy Committee. Hueso's vision: The City of San Diego is financially stable, environmentally sound, and moving in the right direction; city government is trusted, fair, collaborative and efficient, and citizens of San Diego are proud of their government.

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